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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
31 August 1966

State Department review
completed

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
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25X1

31 August 1966

HIGHLIGHTS

French President de Gaulle met for a half hour with the ranking DRV representative in Cambodia on 31 August. Although Paris characterized the meeting as the most important France has ever had on Vietnam, there has been no indication as to the details of the discussion.

25X1

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:

A four-man US Marine fire team is missing in an area about seven miles southeast of Da Nang (Para. 1). A Viet Cong mine exploded near the market place in Can Tho today killing one South Vietnamese civilian (Para. 2). The Trai Bi Special Forces Camp was attacked by Viet Cong recoilless-rifle and small-arms fire for the second time in five days (Para. 3). Operation OAHU ended in Tay Ninh Province with relatively light casualties on both sides (Para. 5).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:

The US Mission feels that government precautions to prevent the Viet Cong from subverting the elections are the maximum practical under the circumstances (Paras. 1-3). A press account cites a recent communiqué from the People's Armed Forces Advisory Council which advises the government to initiate military operations across the Demilitarized Zone into North Vietnam (Para. 4). Colonel Loan, the police director, might succeed General Vien as the Minister of Security after the September elections (Paras. 5-6).

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Two more

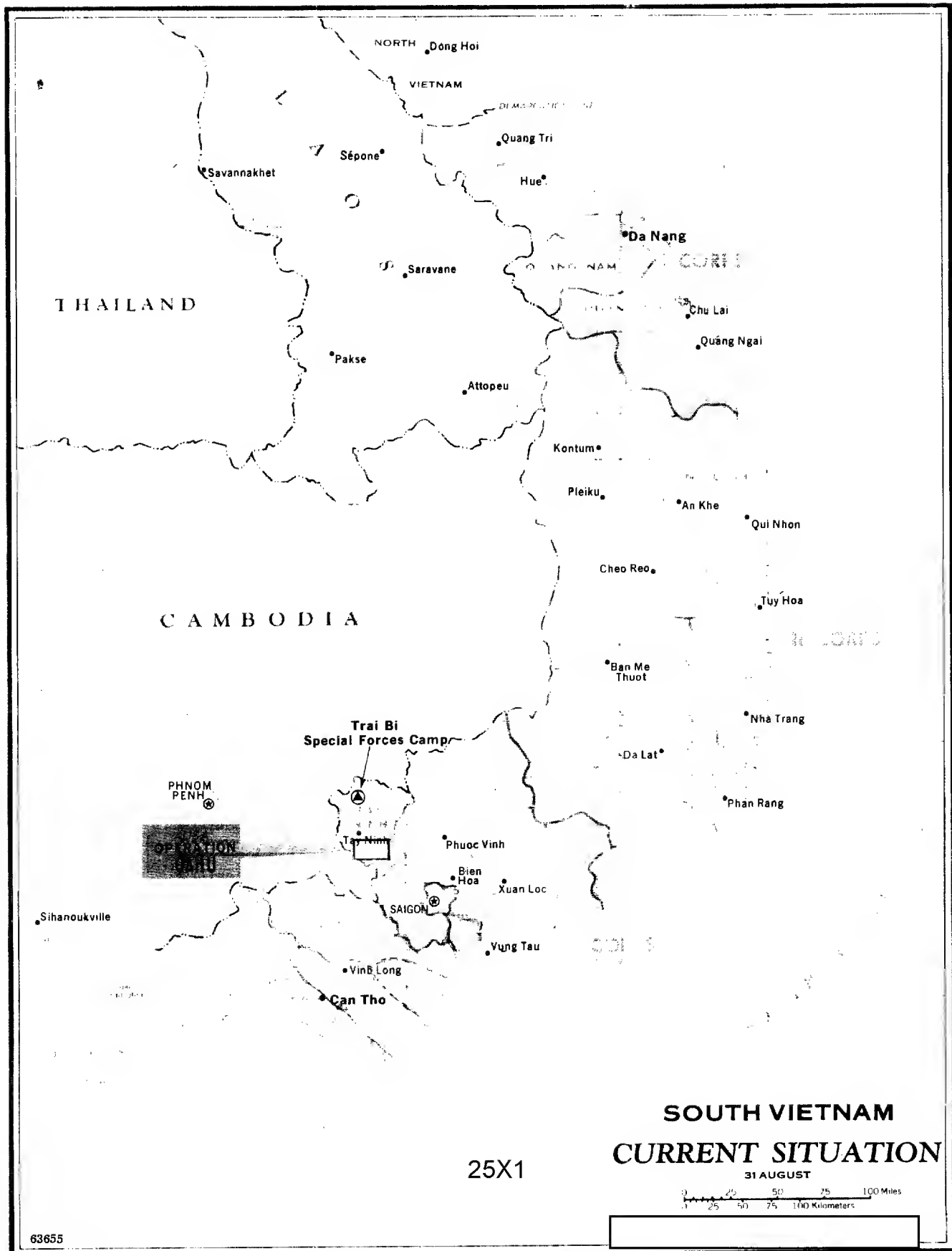
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North Vietnamese PT boats were probably destroyed on 30 August (Paras. 4-5). Two more US aircraft downed over the DRV (Paras. 6-7).

IV. Other Communist Military Developments:
There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: French President Charles de Gaulle spoke for half an hour with the ranking DRV representative in Cambodia, but there are no details on what was discussed (Paras. 1-3).

31 August 1966



I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. A four-man US Marine fire team is reported missing in an area about seven miles southeast of Da Nang in Quang Nam Province. When the team failed to return from a patrol on 28 August, a squad of marines was sent to the area but was unable to locate the missing team. The search is continuing.

2. A Viet Cong claymore-type mine exploded near the market place in Can Tho in the delta province of Phong Dinh this morning. One South Vietnamese civilian was killed and three others wounded. One Viet Cong suspect was detained.

3. The Trai Bi Special Forces Camp in northern Tay Ninh Province was attacked by a Communist force of undetermined size today with recoilless-rifle and small-arms fire. There was no immediate report of casualties. In a similar attack on 27 August, three Vietnamese soldiers and 13 civilians were wounded.

IV Corps Activity

4. Five small unit actions in the IV Corps area yesterday resulted in South Vietnamese casualties of five killed and four wounded. Viet Cong losses included 28 killed and four weapons captured.

5. The two-battalion search-and-destroy Operation OAHU conducted by the US 25th Infantry Division in Tay Ninh Province ended today. Six Americans were killed and four wounded in this operation, which began on 31 July. Communist losses totaled 20 killed and 12 captured. A total of 293 tactical air strikes were flown in support of the operation.

31 August 1966

I-1

II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. In the opinion of the US Mission, the Vietnamese armed forces and the National Police are making a maximum effort to counter Viet Cong anti-election activities. The task of physically guarding the polling places and the candidates has been assigned to the police and the Regional and Popular Forces. Just prior to the elections, South Vietnamese Army troops will be given the responsibility of guarding roads, outlying villages, and district towns against Viet Cong attacks aimed directly at disrupting voter turnout. Any void left in the countryside by the redeployment of ARVN units will be filled by US troops.

2. The details of the security plans are being worked out at corps, division, and province level. Mission officials who have examined the plan for Saigon and surrounding Gia Dinh Province are impressed with its thoroughness. However, the effectiveness of such plans will depend largely on the degree of force the enemy actually commits against likely election targets.

3. A number of reports have outlined Communist intentions to exploit virtually every aspect of the election process which the Viet Cong think can be subverted. These plans, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] range from confiscating voter registration cards and halting road traffic to the destruction of ballot boxes.

Council Advises Offensives Against North Vietnam

4. According to an unconfirmed press account, the 79-man People's Armed Forces Advisory Council issued a communiqué today advising the government to initiate counteroffensives across the Demilitarized Zone in retaliation for the recent infiltration of North Vietnamese troops and supplies. The council, organized by the government in July to advise Premier Ky and his cabinet on political, economic, social, and cultural affairs, would appear to be transcending its duty in offering such military advice.

31 August 1966

II-1

Possible Shuffle of National Security Personnel

5. Colonel Nguyen Ngoc Loan, the National Police director and one of Prime Minister Ky's close military associates will apparently succeed General Linh Quang Vien as the Minister of National Security,

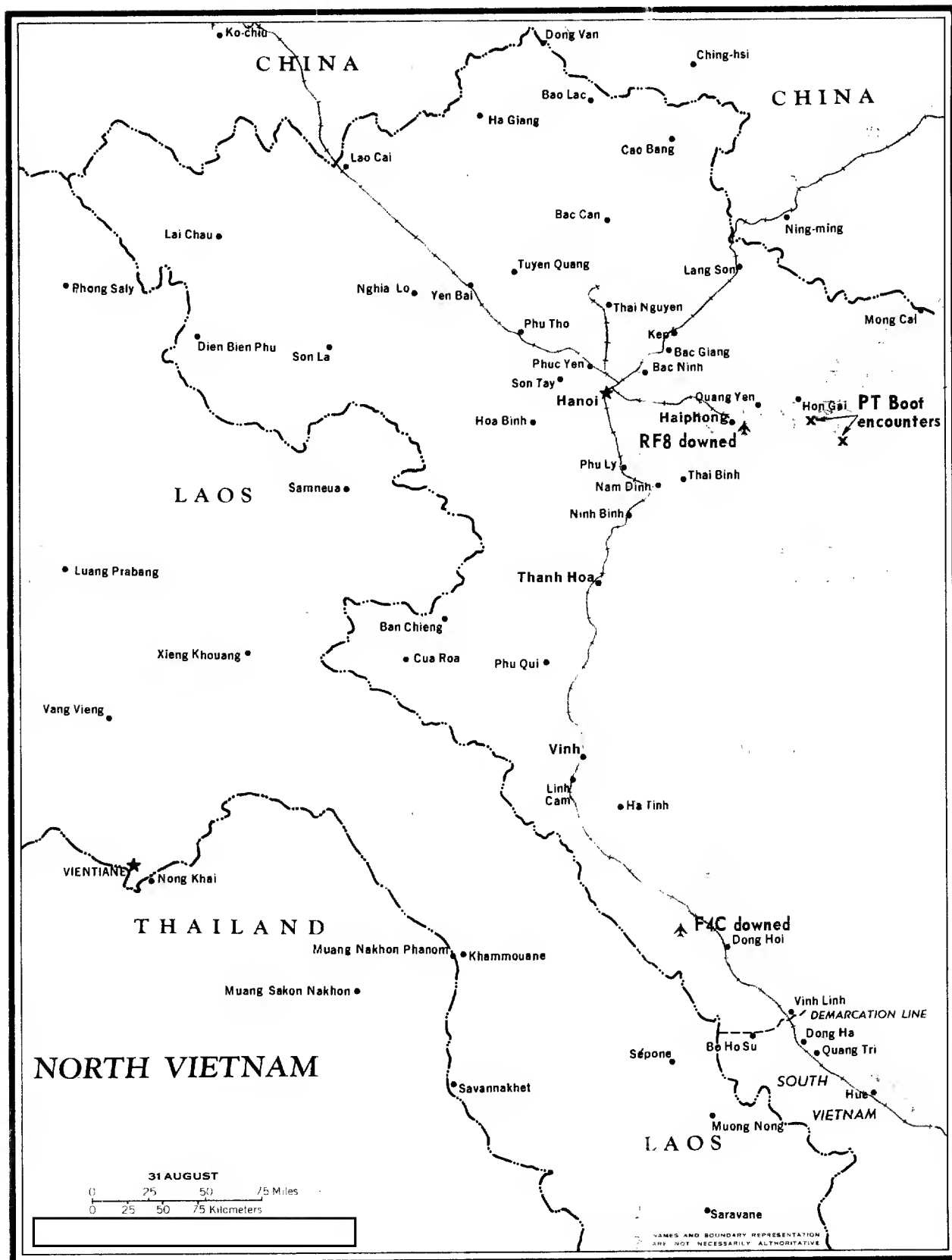
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31 August 1966

II-2

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

31 August 1966

IV-1

V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. French President Charles de Gaulle held a private, half-hour conversation with Nguyen Thuong, the ranking DRV representative in Cambodia, on 31 August according to press reports from Phnom Penh. Although an official French spokesman characterized the meeting as the most important France has ever had on Vietnam, there has been no indication as to the details of the discussion.

2. Nguyen Thuong is an experienced, though colorless, DRV diplomat who served in Moscow in the mid-fifties and as North Vietnam's first ambassador to French-speaking Guinea from 1960 to this spring. His arrival in Phnom Penh only days before De Gaulle's appearance indicates that he was fully briefed in Hanoi for the meeting, which was reportedly planned well in advance by the French.

3. The fact that De Gaulle scheduled such a meeting is a further manifestation of his desire to demonstrate France's unique qualifications for serving as a mediator in the Vietnam conflict.

31 August 1966

V-1

TOP SECRET

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